Consider a chihuahua as your next guard dog

When a string of robberies started happening around the suburbs where we lived, Amber had suggested we adopt a guard dog. I knew this wasn't the real reason she wanted a dog, however. It was only six months ago that her childhood dog, Bubba, had died of old age. From what I was told, he lived for almost twenty years. He was an old, ragged chihuahua when I had met him, with wet, bulging eyes rimmed with gunk, and his tongue constantly slithered out between his gnarled teeth like an earthworm emerging from the mud. I was never fond of Bubba, or any chihuahua for that matter. While I knew instinctively that they could be just as loving and loyal as any other breed of dog, I've never met one that was well behaved. I put up with him for Amber's sake, though, and I mourned with her as he took his last breath in her lap. I knew there was a hole in her heart after Bubba's passing, so the day after she had suggested adoption, I surprised her with a trip to our local animal shelter.

That's when we met Bambi.

I'll take this opportunity to mention that our house isn't a large one. In fact, it is the smallest one in our neighborhood. My parents had bought it for us at a dirt cheap price as a wedding present a year ago. It's a bit run down, but it's ours, and Amber and I look forward to starting the rest of our lives here. It's a one story, squat square made of red brick and a dark brown roof that I have to fix every month or two. Inside, there's just the living room, which housed a glass cabinet filled with family heirlooms, the kitchen/dining room, a small hallway with a cramped closet and an equally cramped bathroom, and two bedrooms. One of them is ours, and the other we use for storage. See, the only reason I bring all this up is that, for whatever reason, Bambi really likes the storage room. Amber tried to coax him into sleeping in our room, but Bambi stubbornly refused every time. And so, his little bed sat in the middle, surrounded by cardboard boxes. And that was perfectly fine with me.

Bambi never played. He never scampered around like a little dog should, he never curled into Amber's lap when she patted it, he never did ANYTHING that a dog should just...DO naturally! It was wrong! It was wrong and HE was wrong but somehow Amber never saw it like I did!

"He's shy!" she once shot back at me when I tried explaining how I felt. "He was dumped on a street and he's been alone ever since! Do you think that doesn't affect a dog? Of course he won't play or cuddle with us, Adrian! Nobody has ever given Bambi a chance before so why should he be trustful of anybody?"

"Any other dog would open up by now!" I argued, feeling like I wanted to pull my hair out. "He's not normal, why can't you see that?!"

"These things take time! Bambi needs time! As his new family, we need to be patient with him! We need to keep showing him love and support and he'll eventually open up to us, I know it!"

All the while, Bambi silently watched us, before he turned away and padded back to his room.

This is how life continued for the next few months, and all day there would be this heavy weight on my shoulders. I felt trapped in my own home, and I felt like this damn dog was ruining my relationship. Things got more tense between Amber and I. Every day something would set us off and we'd snap and bark at each other and end the day feeling miserable. Amber continued to work with Bambi while I did my best to ignore him. That would piss her off and the arguments would start all over again. One night, Amber kicked me out of our room and threw me my pillow and a thin blanket. I had suggested we return Bambi to the dog shelter, and needless to say that conversation ended badly.

I laid on the couch, brooding over how unfair my life had become and how Bambi was at the center of it. This wasn't right. Before he came along, things were perfect between Amber and I. We were happy and laughing and enjoying life everyday. But Bambi...Bambi was like a poison. His silence and his empty eyes hung over our house like some molded tarp and I was the only one who saw it.

I heard the familiar sound of Bambi's nails clicking against the hardwood floor, and I turned my head to see him staring at me from a few feet away. An all to familiar chill touched the back of my neck, but I ignored it and glared defiantly back at that damn mutt.

"Can I help you?" I snarled.

Bambi continued to stare at me.

And then he grinned.

Good god, he fucking grinned. Like a human would. His lips stretched upwards, and it was much too large for a fucking chihuahua. His fangs glistened, and for a moment I feared he would leap at me, and devour me. That moment of terror stretched for an eternity, and just when I couldn't stand it anymore the grin disappeared. Bambi turned around and retreated back to him room, leaving me there to realize that piss was streaming down my leg. I didn't sleep that night, or for most of the week.

When the week neared its end, Amber got a call from the hospital. Her mother was in emergency care, and was going to be transferred to a hospital in another city. It's not my place to be airing my mother in law's dirty laundry on the Internet, so I'll refrain from talking about why she was hospitalized. Amber immediately packed her bags in a rush, all while searching for any pet friendly hotels she could stay at while she would be visiting her mother. None that would allow pets were in our budget, so she reluctantly turned to me and frowned.

"You need to take care of Bambi while I'm gone," she informed me, making sure I was meeting her eyes. "I need you to promise me that you'll do it."

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I gulped. After that night on the couch, I had gone from hating Bambi to being terrified of him. The last thing I wanted was to be alone with him. I forced myself to agree to care for him, for her sake. "Y-Yeah," I stammered, trying to ignore the demon chihuahua at our feet. "No problem."

"Good." Amber took a deep breath and stepped closer to me. She planted a kiss on my lips, the first one in what felt like ages. "I...I think some time away from each other will be good for us," she said, not quite meeting my eyes. "Things have been hard, but...I do love you."

I let out a shaking breath. "I love you too," I replied. "And don't worry, Bambi and I will be here when you get back."

She closed her eyes and leaned it close to hug me. "Thank you," she whispered. And then she was gone, and I was to be alone with Bambi for the next week and a half.

The first two days, I locked myself in my room and just left Bambi to his own devices. By this point, I knew he didn't need to eat or go outside. I knew he wasn't just a chihuahua. Every time I closed my eyes all I saw was that horrific, uncanny, evil grin. I knew that he knew the effect he was having on me, and I knew that behind that empty expression he wore he must've enjoyed it. Two weeks earlier and that would've pissed me off. Now, it just filled me with dread. I was alone with a monster, and every hour I feared what he would do to me. On the second night, I'd get my answer.

As I laid there, I could faintly hear his nails clicking on the hardwood floor. He was pacing around the house, moving from the living room to the kitchen and back again. It was almost like Bambi was on patrol, and it was the most active I had seen- or rather, heard him. I chewed my bottom lip anxiously. What was different. Was he making his move tonight? Was he taunting me? Or was it all just coincidence? I suddenly realized that while lost in my theory crafting, I lost track of his pacing. I held my breath, wondering where he was in the house. Did he finally go back to his room? I was almost ready to relax when I heard something scratch at the bottom of the door.

I froze, ice shooting straight through my blood as Bambi continued to scratch relentlessly at the door. His tiny nails clawed into the wood desperately. If he was any other dog, I'd coo over the adorable behavior and let him in. But Bambi wasn't doing this to be cute, he was trying to get me. He was trying to hurt me.

"Bambi!" I shouted, hating how my voice cracked in fear. "S-Stop it!"

The scratching stopped, and silence filled the entire house. Bambi didn't make a sound for the longest time. But then he started scratching again. Only these weren't the scratches of a little chihuahua. They were louder, and so much deeper. They belonged to the claws of a much larger animal, and the sounds of him trying to get through the door echoed through the whole room; I clamped down on my ears and his under my blanket as I realized that the scratches were starting from the very top of the door and working their way down to the bottom! Too large! Much too large for even the biggest dog! What was on the other side of that door?! What the hell did we bring into our house?!

"STOP IT!" I shouted at the top of my lungs, and once more everything went silent. I was sobbing now, and was gasping for air between strangled cries. Was it over? Was he gone?

The doorknob shook. I had locked the door, but I never expected this. A moment passed, then Bambi, or whatever Bambi was now, tried again. He threw his weight against the door while he continued to twist and pull at the doorknob. I watched in horror as the entire doorframe, and even the walls shake with each slam against the door. I leapt out from my bed, and searched around for something I could use as a weapon. That door was not going to hold. Bambi was going to break in here and kill me. But then the worst thing happened. Something I hadn't even thought possible but was so, so much worse than him breaking in.

Bambi...

Bambi spoke.

"A....dri....an..." he rasped, his weight thinking against the door and staying there. His voice...it was that of a being with a throat so dry it hadn't spoken in centuries. No...millennia! It was the voice of time itself, of the beginning and the end. This voice witnessed creation as we know it and will witness the end of everything. It clawed at my hearing, clinging to it with nails more ancient than the earth itself.

"A...dri...an...O..pen...the door...ADRIAN!"

The door splintered open, and I passed out in fear.

It was the sunlight that peaked through the blinds that awoke me. I blinked and stared up at the ceiling. The events of last night filtered through, and with a gasp I shot up, only to realize I couldn't. Something was weighing me down, something so heavy I felt like my lungs would burst. I glanced down and a scream was caught in my throat. Bambi was sitting on me, his empty eyes piercing directly through mine. Eyes that I now knew told the story of a being far more ancient than I could've imagined, a being who knew the empty abyss we're all destined for when we die, and who could send me there whenever it wanted. Bambi tilted his head slightly, an action that would've gotten a joyous gasp out of Amber on any other day. He then stepped off of me, and padded through the now broken door. I watched him vanish into his room, and the moment he was put of sight I raced towards the bathroom, upheaving every content of my stomach for what felt like hours. It was hopeless. I never felt so defeated, so small and insignificant in my entire life. I knew what Bambi was now, and I knew that there was nothing I could do about him. At any moment, he could send me to the void in his eyes, my soul trapped forever in an empty hell of his making. I wished

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in that moment that we never went to that stupid shelter, I wish we never adopted this…this thing and brought it into our home. I wanted to take him and drown him, I wanted him dead and gone but I knew nothing I did would matter. Bambi wasn't a dog. He looked like one but he was something far, far more powerful. He would come back. He would come back and torment me for eternity because all he saw me as was an insignificant toy for him to ruin and throw away.

I paused, wiping my mouth and glancing towards the direction of Bambi's room.

If that was all true…why was I just now doubting it?

Contradicting thoughts raced through my head, crashing and colliding and making more contradictions.

Why a chihuahua? Why appear at a shelter? Why would an eldritch being allow itself to be taken home? Why not torture us endlessly? Why act like a…well, nothing like an ordinary dog but still…a dog? Why tolerate Amber? Why go after me? Why speak to me? Why horrify me? Why do all this now when Amber left? Why….

I blinked, and my throat felt as dry as Bambi had sounded last night. Was…was it that simple? Did Bambi torment me because I wasn't like Amber? Because I didn't treat him with unconditional love?

I needed to test this. There was no way it could be that stupidly simple. Swallowing my fear, I timidly called Bambi's name. He didn't show, so I cleared my throat. "Bambi!", I called, louder. "Come here, boy!"

A few seconds passed, and eventually Bambi peeked around the corner. He gazed at me intensely, but I forced myself to let the fear wash over me and steeled myself. I grinned and held out my hand. "Come here, Bambi," I cooed with the same soft tone Amber used.

After a few more seconds, Bambi approached. He stopped a foot away from me, standing perfectly still with his unblinking, abyssal eyes. It was all so perfectly Bambi, I realized. With a nervous laugh, I reached over and rubbed the top of his head. His fur was so soft, I had never realized it because I had always refused to touch him. Bambi didn't react to being pet, but I don't think he needed to. If he did, then he wouldn't be Bambi.

Fuck it, I thought. If nobody else wanted this freaky eldritch demon of a dog, then I guess Amber and I would just have to give him a home instead.

Standing up, I whistled for Bambi to follow me as I walked confidently to the kitchen, where his leash laid on the table. Amber had bought it on his first day here, but Bambi always doggedly refused to go on a walk. Well, that was going to change today. The moment Bambi saw the leash, he stopped following, and began to turn around.

"Not today," I said cheekily as I scooped the chihuahua up. Bambi tensed in my arms, and I remembered that this was the first time either of us had picked him up. I gave him a wet smooch on his cheek and carried him out the front door. I set him down on the sidewalk in front of our house and quickly fastened his leash on him. I tugged on it gently.

"C'mon, boy," I encouraged. "Let's go."

Bambi didn't move. He didn't blink. He didn't wag his tail. All of these I expected of him by now, yet I continued to gently tug on the leash, always making sure never to hurt him. I wasn't giving up that easily, even if it meant standing here all day looking like a complete ass in front of the whole neighborhood.

Eventually, Bambi took a step forward, followed by another. Our walk began at a snails pace; I got the feeling Bambi was reluctant about all of this. Amusingly, I think he eventually realized that he, the actual eldritch deity, was not going to get his way this time. He walked by my side now, his eyes trained forward and his body a little stiff. Even though he never showed emotions, I got the impression he was slightly embarrassed to be put here, guided by a leash like a common house pet.

A sudden series of barks startled me, and I looked up to see we were passing by a young woman and her own dog: a golden retriever. The dog was pulling at its leash, teeth bared as it snarled and snapped towards Bambi with such unbridled fury. The poor young woman was desperately holding her dog back, the look of shock and confusion in her eyes indicating that this wasn't normal. She tried apologizing over her dog's booming barks but I waved her off, telling her it's fine. All the whole, Bambi was staring ahead. His head calmly turned towards the much bigger dog. The golden retriever made eye contact with Bambi for only a second when it suddenly yelped in pain and retreated between its owner's legs, shaking intensely and howling profusely. The woman looked at her dog's sudden change of behavior, and then looked back at us. I knew she saw what I previously saw in Bambi. I shrugged apologetically as Bambi and I left her behind.

Bambi and I settled into a routine after this, after I fixed the bedroom door of course. We'd wake up, I'd eat breakfast, I'd take him on a walk before dropping him back off at the house and leaving for work. I'd come back, take him on another walk, grab some ice cream and a pup cup he never ate, and return home for the night. Despite all this Bambi never blinked, never moved more than he had to, and never wagged his tail. But that was okay, I knew Bambi wasn't the emotional type. I called and FaceTimed Amber every day, both telling and showing her the progress Bambi and I were making together. To say she was ecstatic would be an understatement. I had never seen her smile so wide before. She told me her mother was feeling better, and they'd be back the next afternoon.

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"I can't wait to see my boys again!" she exclaimed, before ending the video call for the night. Bambi retreated to his room, and I settled into bed, excited for what tomorrow would bring.

I didn't process it at first, but what awoke me was the sound of footsteps. Not Bambi's, but those of someone wearing heavy boots. Actually...I think there were multiple people by the sounds of it. And I could hear them speaking. I couldn't make out the words, but I think they were trying to be quite. I blinked in confusion and reached for my phone. Was Amber back? Did she bring her mom here? The phone read 2:41 AM. No...it wasn't Amber. I listened again, and realized that the voices were male. I shot up, suddenly a lot more awake with my heart pounding in my chest.

Robbers.

I slowly slid out of my bed, wincing as the floor beneath me creaked. The voices suddenly stopped, and one of them barked something. I heard footsteps thudding towards my room, and before I could hide the door was forced open with a mighty kick. I yelled in surprise as a large burly man rushed inside, and I found the barrel of a gun pointed directly at my face.

"Stay the fuck down!" he growled as his large boot struck my chest. The air was driven from my lungs as I collapsed onto the floor. The man pinned me down with his boot, the gun still trained on me. His hand was shaking, I noticed blearily. "Shit," he muttered. "Shit, shit, shit!" He turned his head back and called out to his accomplices. "Hurry up, guys! We gotta go!"

I heard glass shatter, and I realized that they were going after the cabinet full of heirlooms. "Please..." I gasped. "Stop this..."

"Shut up!" the man kicked me again, and I cried silently as fresh pain shot through me. The man was not a professional, some observant part of me realized. He was panicking, he was losing control all because one helpless guy caught them.

Through blurred vision, I saw a small shape enter the room. It paused and looked up at the man holding me at gunpoint. It was Bambi. Forgetting what he was for a moment, I silently pleaded with him to run and hide, but that wasn't what Bambi did.

For the very first time, Bambi barked.

It was a shrill, ear grating noise very typical for a chihuahua. That annoying yapping that drives nails into your head; it was the kind of bark that made you hide your face in embarrassment because your untrained chihuahua started attacking your guests and you had to lock it in another room.

That barking startled the man, who turned towards Bambi and swore loudly. "You've gotta be fucking joking!" He cupped his hand to his mouth and tried talking over Bambi. "Let's go, guys!" he pleaded. "People are gonna hear this and the cops are gonna be on our asses!"

"Shut the fucking bitch up!" one of the others shouted back.

"Goddammit," the robber hissed as he stepped off of me. I gasped and propped myself against the wall and the man stomped towards my dog.

I shot my hand out in a feeble attempt to stop him. "No, please don't!" I begged, but I'm not sure who I was talking to in that moment.

In slow motion, I watched as the man swung his foot back, intending to kill Bambi in one fierce kick. As it sailed towards the chihuahua, I saw something that reminded me of why I used to be so scared of Bambi in the first place.

His empty eyes...they weren't empty anymore. There was something moving in them: a maelstrom of eternity. I saw everything. I saw the creation of the universe and its destruction only for that destruction to lead to another creation. The universe was created and destroyed over and over and I sat there witnessing all of it. Bambi wasn't an aspect of the void, he WAS the void. He was infinity itself. He was where we came from and he was where we'd return to when we died. This wasn't some Cthulhu like monster I previously thought was trying to break down my door. This was something, far, far worse. Hearing it on the other side of the door was bad enough but this? My words could never hope to accurately describe what I was witnessing. I knew in that moment I should've gone mad, that I should've died tearing my eyes out and screaming until I choked on my own gore but I didn't. I couldn't. Bambi wouldn't let me. I was his. I was now his favorite, destined along with the rest of my family line to be disciples of his nothingness. The void would love us and protect us so long as we loved it in return. It was a contradiction beyond everything else but Bambi didn't care. The rules were his to make and break how he saw fit.

I was only able to pull my eyes away from him when a bloodcurdling scream tore itself out from the man. His leg had connected with Bambi but the chihuahua of eternity didn't flinch. Instead the leg exploded into a shower of blood and gore that caked the entire room in a deep crimson. The man fell to the ground and Bambi was on top of him, much bigger now and looking nothing like a dog anymore. The creature before me was nowhere near Bambi's true form, and it was that alone which gave me the courage to watch. It was tall, so tall that I had no idea how to fit in the room. Jagged bones rattled and folded against each other to accommodate the room's small size. It was an aspect of the void, pure darkness given shape yet I could see it so clearly. It was skinny; so skinny I thought I could wrap my fingers around it. Large dagger like claws dug into the man's side as he screamed for a mercy that would never come. There was no face on the creature, yet one of its claws reached up and stabbed into the head, forcibly and violently tearing into it until a gaping, bloody maw resembling a mouth was made. The creature let out a rattling breath before its new mouth dove onto the man's head, feasting on him like a starved prisoner tearing into bread. Two sets of footsteps ran down the hall and stopped just outside of the bedroom. I heard two men scream in pure, maddening terror and that caught the

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creature's attention. It turned towards them, its claws still ripping into the long dead man even though there was nothing left to identity it as one; just a mushy pile of flesh and blood.

It let out a wheezing bark before it lunged towards the two robbers, and I lost sight of it as it tackled them into the hall. I heard it though, I heard the ripping and tearing and I heard their screams reach a brutal crescendo before being silenced by one last squelch of flesh being mangled. I sat there, numb and covered in blood and mentally reeling over everything I had just witnessed. I heard a low growl and the creature crawled awkwardly into the room, its impossibly numerous bones shifting and cracking to allow it to fit into the room. With a bitter laugh, I realized that Bambi never intended to harm me that first night, for if he did then this would've with no doubt been my fate. I thought back to that dog's evil grin and wondered if I misinterpreted that as well. I watched the creature approach and felt fear well up inside me. I instinctively tried to back away, the creature noticed and paused. Shame pooled over me as I forced myself to relax. This was Bambi. This was my chihuahua. I noticed one last detail about this form: the large ears perked up on its head.

The thing opened its deformed mouth and let out what sounded like a small whine. "A…dri…an…safe…Bambi… Protect…A…dri…an…"

A smile broke past my lips, and I held out my hand towards the creature. "Good boy, Bambi," I whispered as it leaned its head against my palm.

We stayed like that for what felt like forever, but eventually I heard a knock at the door. I ignored it at first, but as the knocking persisted I groaned painfully and stood up. As I walked towards the front door, I heard a familiar clicking of nails. Looking down, I saw Bambi following me as a chihuahua once again. I knelt down and rubbed his head, and to my surprise me licked me gently. I watched in silent awe as all the blood seeped off of me and funnel into Bambi's mouth. Before I knew it, I was completely cleansed, and Bambi promptly returned to the hallway, where I could now see he was licking up all the blood and gore.

What a good dog, I chuckled to myself.

I opened the door and smiled. "Hello, officer," I greeted. "Is everything alright?"

The officer, an older man with a stink eye, looked at me curiously. "Uh, yeah…" He coughed and cleared his throat. "Some neighbors called about a noise complaint. Said they heard shouting and what sounded like a fight. Mind explaining that?"

"Of course." I opened the door wider and let the officer through, showing him the living room and the broken glass of the China cabinet. "Some robbers broke in and tried to steal stuff out of the cabinet there." I paused, then glanced at the front door and hummed. "I think I forgot to lock the door…"

"Hmm." The officer clicked his tongue and looked around. "And the robbers?"

"Three of them," I clarified. "And my guard dog chased them out."

"Guard dog?" the officer asked, and at that moment Bambi made his entrance. All traces of blood were now gone, and he stopped by my feet. The officer smirked. "You mean this little thing?"

"Yep," I confirmed with a smile. "Bambi here may not look like much, but he's as fierce as they come. Even bit them a couple of times."

The officer laughed and bent down to Bambi's level. He began to praise him for being such a brave boy when he paused. His brow furrowed as he looked into Bambi's eyes. I noticed him start to shake when I cleared my throat to get his attention. The officer stood up and let out a sigh to calm himself down. "Yeah, uh…" He trailed off and glanced down at Bambi, before shaking his head and turning back to me. "Well, if they're gone then that's that, but if you want I can put another officer here for the night to watch the house while you sleep. Make sure they don't come back, you know?"

"Of course," I agreed. "Though I think Bambi here is protection enough." I reached down and patted his head gently, while he looked at me with those empty, bottomless eyes.

Life moved on after that. Amber came back the next morning and I told her about the break in, but not about what Bambi had done. I gave her the same story I gave the officer and she praised Bambi for being such a brave boy. Imagine her surprise when, for the very first time, Bambi wagged his tail. I guess she was right about him needing time and all that, though even five years later he's still mostly the same silent, unblinking chihuahua we love. He sleeps with us now, as the second bedroom now belongs to our daughter. Though he doesn't seem to mind his space being stolen, he loves that girl more than anything. If anyone can get him to wag his tail, it's her.

Eternity in the void is a lonely thing, I'd imagine. Being that eternity even more so. I sometimes wonder if that's why he chose the form of a chihuahua: to find people who would make his infinite existence a little more meaningful. Now that he's found us, his forever home, he won't be lonely anymore. And when my family line eventually dies off, we'll return to his void. Our existence will become part of him, and so he'll never be apart from us. That doesn't scare me. It means I'll always have my loyal, loving guard dog.

Sometimes I have nightmares. I'll dream of a blood soaked room and bodies piled high. But when I wake up, I'll reach over and stroke Bambi's fur. He'll comfort me, and I'll drift off to sleep with his words echoing in my head.

"Fa…mi…ly….safe… Bambi…. Protect… fa…mi…ly…."